

FWP POSITION STATEMENT ON FLATHEAD LAKE FISHERIES ISSUES

June, 2013

Background

- Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and FWP share fisheries management authority on Flathead Lake through a co-management plan, 2000-2010, that has expired.
- The plan, still being followed by FWP, relies on recreational angling to control lake trout and benefit native trout.
- Harvest of tens of thousands of lake trout through CSKT's angler-based Mack Days (sanctioned by FWP) has contributed toward that goal.

FWP policy points

- Under the co-management plan, if bull trout fall below secure levels, then aggressive removal techniques, like gillnetting, would be considered.
- Bull trout are 60 percent above secure levels, so FWP does not believe aggressive lake trout removal techniques are called for at this time.

CSKT proposal

- CSKT proposes a gillnetting project to potentially remove more than 100,000 lake trout per year.
- On June 21, CSKT released a draft environmental impact statement.
- CSKT is seeking funding from the Bonneville Power Administration.

Points of contention

- CSKT and FWP are not unified in fisheries management direction nor in agreement on the management alternatives proposed in the draft EIS.
- FWP believes gillnetting suppression of lake trout would be required in perpetuity due to ecosystem effects of Mysis shrimp, which have forever changed the aquatic community of Flathead Lake.
- FWP believes that there is a high level of biological uncertainty associated with the alternatives proposed by CSKT. CSKT's proposed actions could negatively impact native trout (through changes in the food web and by-catch of bull trout) and would negatively impact the popular recreational lake trout fishery.